

A SHORTAGE OF PASTORS?

There is currently a shortage of clergy in most mainline Protestant denominations. Even within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), more pastors are leaving the clergy roster through death, retirement, disability, resignation and/or removal than are being added to the roster through ordination. According to recent trends, for every 200 pastors that are ordained each year there are 400 who die or retire from active service. With an increase in the number of pastors who are leaving the clergy roster, it is easy to see how a shortage of clergy is unfolding.

So whose responsibility is it to “*recruit more pastors*”? According to the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations:

***C9.03** *a) Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:*

5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;

***C12.04** *The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:*

j) To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;

C.4.03 *To fulfil these purposes, this congregation shall*

c) Challenge, equip and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.

A brief cursory review of the ELCA Model Constitution seems to place the responsibility to “recruit more pastors” on “Every minister of Word and Sacrament”, “the Congregation Council” and “the congregation”.

If that is truly the responsibility of “every minister”, “the Congregation Council” and “the congregation”, how is that playing out within our congregation?

- How does the congregation “*challenge, equip and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation*”?
- How does the Congregation Council and every minister “*seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel*”?

SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS & IDEAS

- 1. We could invite all members to consider how they carry out their calling in their daily lives.** What is God calling you to be and to do with your life? What is God’s purpose for you?
- 2. The congregation could challenge, equip and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives.** What would this look like? How would you want the congregation to “challenge, equip and support” you in carrying out your calling?
- 3. We could help people to identify their gifts for ministry and then provide them with opportunities for the practice of their ministry.** What “gifts for ministry” do you have and how are you using those gifts for the practice of your ministry with others?
- 4. We could encourage and support members to consider and develop life-changing ministries.** What kinds of ministry projects might we undertake together that have the possibility to change people’s lives? What groups of people might work together so that God’s work is accomplished through what we do?
- 5. We could invite those who have the personal characteristics for ordained ministry to consider that as a potential career choice.** In your opinion, who has the characteristics of a good pastor and what have you said to them that would encourage them to consider that as a potential career choice?

It takes a village to raise up future leaders. What might we do to raise up future pastors?

*Peace and blessings,
Pastor Bob Dealey*

A MISSION-MINDED CONGREGATION

The following questions are asked to see how “mission-minded” you think our congregation is and what might be done to help our congregation to become more “mission-minded”:

1. What is the Mission Statement of First Lutheran Church?
2. In what ways do our congregational leaders use the Mission Statement to guide them with the development of new ministries?
3. How does the Mission Statement help the congregation cast a vision for its future?
4. When planning ministries, does our congregation consider the changing demographics in the local community?
5. Do you think that it is more important to:
 - a. Get people to come into the church building? OR
 - b. Go to where people are to minister to them?
6. Are our congregational ministries:
 - a. Geared for those who are already active in the congregation? OR
 - b. Developed for newcomers and those not presently active in the congregation?
7. Does our congregation have a plan to reach out to the unchurched in the community?
8. With what community organizations does our congregation partner for the sake of ministry?
9. How does our congregation make a difference in the world through the ministries of the wider Church? What ministries of the wider Church does our congregation support?
10. What kinds of barriers keep people from participating in the life and ministry of our congregation? What can be done to remove those barriers?
11. Describe a way that our congregation teaches people to live out their faith in the course of their daily lives.
12. How would you explain to someone who is not familiar with First Lutheran Church that our congregation is “mission-minded”?
13. How often do you (or the congregation) participate in “mission trips”? If you have gone on a mission trip, where did you go and what did you do?
14. In what ways does our congregation support the development of new mission congregations or the re-development of already existing congregations?
15. How does the congregation work with other congregations to engage in community projects?
16. How many specific persons can you identify whose lives are positively impacted by our congregation’s ministries?
17. For what program/ministry do you think the congregation is best known by those outside of the church?
18. What does our congregation do that is “meaningful” and “relevant” to those who are not a part of the congregation?
19. What percentage of our congregation’s offerings are used to support mission projects or ministries?
20. If you were to become more mission-minded, what would you do?

Thank you for your interest in fulfilling God’s mission for you and your life as well as for the congregation and its’ life. May God continue to bless us as we work together as God’s people.

God’s peace and blessings,
Pastor Bob Dealey
Coordinator of Stewardship & Outreach
First Lutheran Church
Topeka, Kansas